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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001925

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL NI ECOWAS

SUBJECT: KOUYATE ON U.S. ACCREDITATION TO ECOWAS

REF: A. ABUJA 1745

1B. BAMAKO 2153

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter, reason 1.5 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary. Ambassador met with ECOWAS Executive Secretary Kouyate on July 27. Kouyate indicated that

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accreditation of the American Ambassador to the ECOWAS Secretariat should be easily accomplished by the Mediation

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and Security Council, and could occur during its scheduled late September session. He also thanked Ambassador for receipt of the certification of ECOWAS to receive security assistance, and conveyed Deputy Executive Secretary Diarra's thanks for his inclusion in the ACRI exercise in Dakar. End Summary.

12. (C) Ambassador Jeter met ECOWAS Executive Secretary Lansana Kouyate in Abuja on July 27, to continue discussion of accrediting the American Ambassador to Nigeria to the ECOWAS Secretariat (raised earlier by the DCM, in Kouyate's absence, with newly-arrived Deputy Executive Secretary Sene. Ref A). Ambassador noted President Konare's reportedly enthusiastic support for the idea in his meeting with our Embassy in Bamako (Ref B), but emphasized that our discussion of the proposal at this point was purely informal. Kouyate warmly welcomed the idea, saying that accreditation would be "very useful." He turned to an ECOWAS official from the Legal Affairs Office for her opinion on the feasibility of such an accreditation, and she opined that as there was "nothing for or against it" in the ECOWAS Treaty, it could very likely be done.

13. (C) Ambassador noted that a similar relationship existed between our Embassy in Addis and the OAU, and our Embassy in Gaborone and the SADC Secretariat. Kouyate replied that some resident Ambassadors from the ECOWAS states in Abuja were accredited to the Secretariat, and one other (unnamed) western Ambassador had requested accreditation. Kouyate then said that the accreditation could easily be accomplished at the next meeting of the Mediation and Security Council, scheduled for the last week of September. The ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State could later endorse this accreditation, he said, but that would probably not be needed. (Comment. President Obasanjo has told the Ambassador that he endorses the idea, saw no impediment, and noted that Ambassadors from ECOWAS member-states, including Nigeria, were working to effect their own accreditation before the American request was put forward. End comment).

14. (C) Kouyate also thanked the Ambassador for receipt of the certification of ECOWAS to receive security assistance from the USG. He mentioned that the Secretariat was installing a sophisticated computerized auditing system, which should enhance the comfort level among donors. The EU was particularly welcoming of this move. Ambassador replied that at the June donors meeting in Abuja of missions interested in assisting ECOWAS, there was a very strong sense of the need to act with "care and consultation" to avoid duplication of effort and the imposition of counter-productive pressure on the organization.

15. (C) Kouyate then conveyed Deputy Executive Secretary Diarra's thanks for his invitation to the just-completed ACRI session in Dakar, saying that Diarra was "very, very impressed." Kouyate also mentioned in passing that, in regard to efforts by ECOWAS to enhance telecommunications in the region, he had been quite taken by the recent suggestion that ECOWAS consider its own communications satellite. This might be possible if costs were shared among the fifteen member-states. A feasibility study would soon be under way, he said, and the World Bank was assisting.

16. (C) Comment. Kouyate welcomed the accreditation of Ambassador Jeter to the Secretariat with enthusiasm equal to

that of ECOWAS Chairman President Konare of Mali, and appeared to suggest it would be easily achieved. It is also significant that President Obasanjo also has endorsed the idea. End comment.

Jeter